

STATUS OF THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1, 4-5 and 13. Please delete claims 3, 6-13 and 15-17 without prejudice or disclaimer.

1. (Amended). An inoculum for application to plants, said inoculum comprising a carrier and an effective quantity of bacteria, the bacteria selected from *Herbaspirillum seropedicae* 2A (ATCC No. PTA-2742), *Pantoea agglomerans* P101 (ATCC No. PTA-2744), *Pantoea agglomerans* P102 (ATCC No. PTA-2740), *Klebsiella pneumoniae* 342 (ATCC No. PTA-2743), *Klebsiella pneumoniae* zmvsy (ATCC No. PTA-2741), *Herbaspirillum seropedicae* Z152 (ATCC No. 35894), *Glucanacetobacter diazotrophicus* PA15 (ATCC No. 49037) and mutant strains derived therefrom, said mutant strains able to enhance the growth of plants.

2. (Original). An inoculum for application to plants, the inoculum comprising a carrier and an effective quantity of a *Klebsiella pneumoniae* bacterial strain.

3. Canceled.

4. (Amended). A biologically pure bacterial culture wherein the bacteria is selected from *Herbaspirillum seropedicae* 2A (ATCC No. PTA-2742), *Pantoea agglomerans* P101 (ATCC No. PTA-2744), *Pantoea agglomerans* P102 (ATCC No. PTA-2740), *Klebsiella pneumoniae* 342 (ATCC No. PTA-2743), and *Klebsiella pneumoniae* zmvsy (ATCC No. PTA-2741).

5. (Amended). A biologically pure culture of a mutant strain, the mutant strain derived from either *Herbaspirillum seropedicae* 2A (ATCC No. PTA-2742), *Pantoea agglomerans* P101 (ATCC No. PTA-2744), *Pantoea agglomerans* P102 (ATCC No. PTA-2740), *Klebsiella pneumoniae* 342 (ATCC No. PTA-2743), or *Klebsiella pneumoniae* zmvsy (ATCC No. PTA-2741), wherein the mutant strain retains the ability to enhance the growth of plants.

6-12. Canceled.

13. (Amended). A method for identifying *Pantoea agglomerans* and *Klebsiella pneumoniae* bacterial strains having the ability to enhance the growth of a cereal grass plant, said method comprising the steps of:

isolating a bacterial isolate wherein the isolate is either a *Pantoea agglomerans* bacterial strain or a *Klebsiella pneumoniae* bacterial strain;

planting a cereal grass seed or a cereal grass seedling with said test material in a planting medium;

growing said planted cereal grass seed or said cereal grass seedling for a time sufficient to allow for a growing seedling to develop and be evaluated for growth enhancement; and

evaluating the growing seedling for evidence of enhanced growth when compared to a growing seedling grown in the absence of test material.

14. (Original). An inoculum for application to plants, the inoculum comprising a carrier and an effective quantity of bacteria wherein the bacteria is identified according to the method of Claim 13.

15-17 – Canceled.